

For Hallowe'en (or Any Other E'en)

Albert Payson Terhune's New Novel, "Fortune"

DOUBTLESS many readers will enjoy the good fortune of reading Albert Payson Terhune's new novel, *Fortune*. The book has some excellent points and some decided weaknesses. But it holds the interest to the end.

The book is interesting as showing the work of a reporter and the inside of newspaper offices. Journalistic conditions are described by a man who knows them, and Park row is sketched with accuracy. Brant Errol, the central character, is a reporter, a personage deified by Eve Gourlay, as "one of the men who make history and who risk their lives to bring people the news of the world." He describes himself rather differently, as "one of the men who herd together in a miserable bunch in the corner of the back hall at

have no position to keep up. They could wear hand-me-down clothes, live six in a room and carry dinner pails. They're earning just enough to be gayly, bravely, piteously poor. They are the heart and lungs of the city."

"Oh, there's the greatest story ever unwritten. The lives of the city's almost poor."

The first part of this story is realistic and convincing, but not so the latter part. The plot, we might say, is "halfway poor." One can accept it as possible, even probable, that Eve would adapt herself to her changed environment as she does, despite her struggles with housekeeping. She is real when she is buying a twelve pound roast for two because the butcher tells her it is the usual size, and throwing it into the garbage pail after one meal because she doesn't know it could be utilized afterward. She is actual when she buys fourteen dozen eggs at once because she has read somewhere that groceries come cheaper if bought in large quantities, and when she struggles to consume the eggs to keep them from being wasted.

But it is difficult to believe that a young woman and untrained girl, with no education save that gained at a fashionable finishing school and with so little experience in life, could make such a flying leap into literature as Eve is represented as making. No, really, that isn't plausible!

Nor will readers give credence—except those who are most credulous—to Mr. Terhune's attempt to make them believe that any one would deliberately throw away \$1,000,000. No one outside an institution for the feeble minded would do that. Such insensate waste is annoying at a time when most readers are halfway poor and economizing on roast beef and eggs to buy Liberty bonds.

FORTUNE. BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE. Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.40.

"The Zeppelin's Passenger"

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM has been reading *East Lynne*, and the influence on him of Mrs. Henry Wood's classic has swerved him from that true course which usually brings to his readers so much happiness. In *The Zeppelin's Passenger*, which is Mr. Oppenheim's latest novel—unless he got out another last night, which is not at all impossible—Sir Francis Levison appears again in the form of a German spy, Baron Bertram Maderstrom, alias Hamar Lessingham. The Lady Isabel of the book is Philippa—Lady Cranston. Her husband is a fine big fellow, who appears to neglect her for the sake of going deep sea fishing. Of course, it being wartime, Sir Henry only pretends to go fishing. His dory takes him aboard a mine sweeper, for secretly he is the master of all the mines that protect the coast of England. This his wife does not know, and she gives him a great raking over for being a slacker and all that kind of thing. Sir Henry tries to tell her that the Admiralty has turned him down when he applied for a job, but it fails to soothe her.

Then the Zeppelin comes along and drops Sir Fr—that is, the Baron, down on the adjacent moors and he steps in through the broad French windows and throws himself upon the mercy of Lady Cranston, for he has a letter of introduction from her brother, who was his chum at college and who is now in a German prison camp. If she will see that he is accepted at the local hotel as a friend of hers, so that he can spend a month in the neighborhood, he will see to it that Brother Dick gets out of prison. Not only does she take the risk of betraying her country for the sake of her brother's appetite, but she falls in love with the German spy as a form of being revenged on her neglected husband, the apparent slacker.

What amazes the constant reader of Mr. Oppenheim's stories (and usually he is delightful) is the fact the novelist tries to give to the German spy a good character although he makes love to the woman partly for the sake of getting her to show him her husband's charts of the mine fields. Yes, of course Berlin has found out the truth about Sir Henry's sporting excursion, just as the British secret service discovers the presence of the spy in Cranston's neighborhood. The elopement does not go through, as in *East Lynne*. The Baron discovers that Philippa loves him only in the ratio of her impatience with her husband. He doesn't start the motor in time, and Sir

Henry pops in, sets the spy free (because he had performed some heroic deed) and takes his almost erring wife in his arms.

It won't do, Mr. Oppenheim. Your readers demand that all German spies meet their just deserts. The least you should do with 'em is have 'em blown up by one of their own raiders.

THE ZEPPELIN'S PASSENGER. BY E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM. Little, Brown & Co. \$1.50.

"The Boomerang"

ONCE upon a time there was a man who never saw *The Old Homestead*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *The Boomerang*. Given such virgin dramatic soil what could be more fitting than such a man should review the novel David Gray has made out of the thoroughly superficial comedy produced by David Belasco two seasons ago?

Coming thus fresh to Mr. Gray's tale the pages make for a certain effect of smart, slangy dialogue, a charming environment in a New England village among prosperous, "nice" Americans, and an element of mystery as to the identity of Virginia Xelva that is very well sustained until almost the last page. Naturally there is an overabundance of "talk" in the story the eventual result of which



CAPT. DAVID GRAY
Author of "The Boomerang"

is to tire the reader and much of the action suggests the method of immemorial French farce, of having the wrong people meet in one room at the wrong time.

The Boomerang seems to be the perfect

"summer novel" that by mistake has been put out at the season of the year when fiction readers are supposed to need more substantial diet. Possibly some one may reply to this charge that if we Hooverize in our bodily food we ought to do the same thing in our literary sustenance. On this line of reasoning Mr. Gray's novelization could be marked up as a well rounded ration.

THE BOOMERANG. BY DAVID GRAY. The Century Company. \$1.40.

"Mam'selle Jo"

By GRANT M. OVERTON.

THERE is a curious circumstance that distinguishes Harriet T. Comstock from other American women novelists: a number of her books, which sold only moderately well in the regular edition, sold in the hundreds of thousands of copies when reprinted. I think this was first noticed in connection with *Joyce of the North Woods* and it is still true, I believe, at least to this extent, that on reprinting Mrs. Comstock's novels do sell tremendously. But meanwhile the "first sale" of her books has been expanding; and in the case of her newest novel, *Mam'selle Jo*, there is considerable reason to believe that the first sale will be very large.

The chief reason is the book's quality. It is far and away the best thing of its kind that Mrs. Comstock has written since *Joyce*. "Of its kind"—the reader of this notice will understand that Mrs. Comstock's books are not for everybody, any more than the work of James Branch Cabell, let us say, is for everybody. And the only way to find out whether she agrees with you (or you with her) is to sample. In a general way we may say that those who like the stories of Gene Stratton-Porter may very probably like the stories of Harriet T. Comstock; but the generalization is open to heavy qualification. Mrs. Comstock is the exponent of feminist ideas which are not exhibited in Mrs. Porter's work at all, and Mrs. Comstock's stories carry a much higher sentimental voltage than do Mrs. Porter's. Mrs. Porter is the better artist and Mrs. Comstock is the better evangelist. But it is by no means certain that these comparisons are profitable, and we will drop them.

Mam'selle Jo is a story of the St. Lawrence country. Jo Morey is a woman of forty who has, after years of the hardest toil, got herself debt free at last. With dismay she finds that she has nothing now in life to work for. With a candor to which no one is likely to take exception she confesses her longing for a child to care for and look after, though the idea of a husband leaves her indifferent or even repelled. She adopts a child who turns out to be—how fatally easy it is to go thoughtlessly on and give away the action of a tale! All that may justly be said is that the characters are so brought into relation with each other as to make not one but several first rate situations. It is only a question of how much simplicity of narration and how much moral earnestness of purpose the reader finds acceptable. If he can enjoy his penny plain as well as his tuppence colored *Mam'selle Jo* ought to "hold him." In the main more women will like this novel than men.

MAM'SELLE JO. BY HARRIET T. COMSTOCK. Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.40.

Just published—third printing ready!

WHAT IS THE GERMAN NATION DYING FOR?

By KARL LUDWIG KRAUSE

This is THE book of the hour, written by one of Germany's foremost statesmen—"at the peril of my life," as he writes from Switzerland. Now that the German nation IS dying, what is the meaning of Germany's latest peace offer and how should the United States and the Allies meet it? This book answers the questions we are all now so eagerly asking. Some chapter headings are: German Barbarians; Why the Germans are Disliked; Bluff; The Crash; Enforced Peace; The Reckoning.

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